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FM USMISSION USNATO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1732

INFO RUEHXX/ALL NATO CAPITALS

RUSBLK/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2324

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 6448

RUEHBAO/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2115

RUCMHR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 0217

RUSBD/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0277

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 81 OF 23 USNATO 05863

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E.O. 12958: RDS-1 58/23/89 (GLITMAN, MAYNARD) OR-P

TASS: PINS, PEPR, AF, UR, NATO

SUBJECT: (C) POLADS DISCUSSION OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN

REF: (A) STATE 218144, (B) USNATO 5615

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. AT AUGUST 21 POLADS DISCUSSION US REP DREW ON GUIDANCE ON AFGHANISTAN CONTAINED REF A AS WELL AS INFORMATION CONTAINED IN KABUL #251 AND TEHRAN #220. HE POSED QUESTIONS ON FOURTH AND FIFTH TICKS, PARA D REF A TO FRG AND TURKISH REPS WHO SAID THEY WOULD CHECK IN THEIR CAPITALS. RE-CASTING THE QUESTION TO FRG ABOUT NUMBER OF SOVIET ADVISORS IN AFGHANISTAN, UK REP SAID LONDON'S ESTIMATES WERE 3,803 TOTAL ADVISORS OF WHICH 1,502 WERE MILITARY, I.E., BELOW US ESTIMATE AND CERTAINLY WELL BELOW FRG ESTIMATE OF 3,000 MILITARY ADVISORS.

3. CANADIAN REP AGAIN RAISED (REF B) QUESTION OF EVACUATION OF DEPENDENTS. OTTAWA DOES NOT BELIEVE THE SITUATION DEMANDS IT AS YET BUT IF WIDESPREAD FIGHTING DOES OCCUR, THIS VIEW COULD CHANGE. UK REP SAID THAT WHILE THERE WAS POSSIBILITY AT PRESENT OF PROBLEMS ARISING INADVERTENTLY FOR FOREIGNERS, FOREIGNERS PRINCIPALLY AT RISK AT PRESENT WERE SOVIETS THEMSELVES.

4. CANADIAN REP NOTED THERE WAS STILL NO EVIDENCE OF COHERENT REBEL LEADERSHIP BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REBEL SUCCESSES. REASON FOR THIS MAY BE, ACCORDING TO CANADIANS, THAT TRIBAL DIVISIONS HAVE BEEN PUT ASIDE BY REBELS FOR THE BEING IN ORDER TO FIGHT TOGETHER AGAINST TARAKI REGIME. DUTCH REP SUPPORTED THIS ANALYSIS.

5. CANADIAN REP REPORTED ON CONVERSATION BETWEEN NEW IRANIAN AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW AND CANADA'S AMBASSADOR FORD. NEW AMBASSADOR HAD SPENT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN EXILE BEFORE RETURNING TO IRAN WITH AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI. IN DISCUSSING SOVIET DISPLEASURE WITH IRAN, FORD REFLECTED TOPPAGE IN GAS DELIVERIES. IN RESPONSE, NEW AMBASSADOR REFERRED VAGUELY TO VARIOUS KINDS OF OVERLAPPING CONTRACTS, BUT ADDED THAT THESE WERE PERSONAL AGREEMENTS WITH SHAN. USSR, AS OTHERS, WOULD HAVE TO PAY FOR DEALING WITH SHAN AND PARTICIPATING IN ARRANGEMENTS UNFAMILIAR FOR IRAN. ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, NEW AMBASSADOR SAID HE DOUBTED USSR WAS CONCERNED ABOUT IMPACT OF ISLAMIC "FUNDAMENTALISM" OF IRAN ON THE USSR. AMBASSADOR FORD IN ANALYZING THIS CONVERSATION FELT THAT IRANIAN AMBASSADOR WAS TRYING TO PUT BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON IRANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS. HOWEVER, FORD FELT THAT "TROUBLE WAS BREWING".

6. UK AND DUTCH CIRCULATED ADDITIONAL WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS ON AFGHANISTAN. THESE ARE CONTAINED IN PARA 7 BELOW.

7. BEGIN TEXTS:

BEGIN TEXT OF UK PAPER:

THE SOVIET UNION AND AFGHANISTAN

1. IN CONTINUATION OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE'S EXCHANGE ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN, YOU, AND OUR COLLEAGUES ON THE COMMITTEE, MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF SOVIET VIEWS WHICH WAS PRODUCED BY OUR EMBASSY AT MOSCOW.

2. THE SOVIET PRESS CONTINUES TO GIVE TARAKI AND AMIE JUST SUFFICIENT COVERAGE TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESENT REGIME IN AFGHANISTAN IS IN CHARGE AND IS DOING A GOOD JOB. THE LULL IN PROPAGANDA AGAINST PAKISTAN WAS BROKEN BY A PETROV ARTICLE IN "PRAVDA" OF 28 JULY, WHICH TOOK UP AGAIN THE STANDARD THEME THAT THE PROBLEMS OF AFGHANISTAN ARE DUE TO OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

3. AN OFFICIAL IN THE SOVIET MFA RECENTLY GAVE OUR EMBASSY AT MOSCOW THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF SOVIET POLICY. HIS STARTING POINT WAS THAT SOVIET POLICY REMAINED AS EXPRESSED IN THE JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED BY MR. BREZHNEV AND MR. DESAI DURING THE LATTERS VISIT. HE DID NOT DENY THAT THE TROUBLES IN AFGHANISTAN REPRESENTED AN EXPRESSION BY SOME AFGHANS OF DISAPPROVAL FOR THE PRESENT REGIME BUT CLAIMED THIS WAS NORMAL IN A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION AND VOLUNTEERED THAT THE PROBLEM WOULD NOT BE RESOLVED QUICKLY.

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RUSBLN/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0025
RUENR/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0441
RUENR/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3116
RUENR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 0218
RUENR/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0278
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 23 USKATO 05863

HE WOULD NOT HOWEVER BE DRAWN ON WHETHER THE SITUATION WAS GOING TO GET BETTER OR WORSE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THE OFFICIAL BLAMED THE PRESENT TROUBLES LARGELY ON THE REACTIONARY CLERGY IN AFGHANISTAN (IN CONTRAST TO CONCILIATORY COMMENTS ABOUT ISLAM - "THE KORAN WAS THE FIRST SOCIALIST WORK" - WHICH HE HAS OFFERED ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS).

4. ON THE LATEST CABINET CHANGES THE SOVIET OFFICIAL PLAYED DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TARAKI AND AMIR TAYEB ON THE DEFENCE PORTFOLIO AND HE SPECIFICALLY DENIED THAT VATANJAR HAD BEEN DEMOTED OR THAT HE HAD BEEN MOVED FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE TO REMOVE THE THREAT OF HIS ORGANISING AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP BASED ON ARMY POWER. IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT IN A DIFFICULT SECURITY SITUATION THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DEFENCE SHOULD BE ASSIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER. VATANJAR'S NEW RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WERE STILL IMPORTANT.

5. THE OFFICIAL WAS SCATHING ABOUT THE US DECISION TO WITHDRAW DEPENDENTS FROM AFGHANISTAN. THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN THE ONLY ONES TO TAKE SUCH ACTION, AND HAD CREATED A WORSE ATMOSPHERE AND INCREASED TENSION.

6. FINALLY, THE OFFICIAL TOUCHED ON DOST'S TALKS IN ISLAMABAD. WHILE HE DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE HELD OUT MUCH HOPE FOR IMPROVED PAKISTAN/AFGHAN RELATIONS, HE REPEATED THE SOVIET VIEW THAT ALL COUNTRIES IN THE AREA SHOULD HAVE GOOD RELATIONS. ON IRAN/AFGHAN RELATIONS, HE SAID IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT THE MUCH PUBLICISED INTERVIEW BETWEEN KHOMENI AND THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN COM THAT IT WAS STRANGE FOR KHOMENI TO CRITICISE SOVIET ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN; THE AFGHANS WERE NOT AFTER ALL IN THE SOVIET POCKET.

7. THE PUBLIC LINE FROM THE PRESS AND THE NFA THEMSELVES APPEARS TO BE THAT TARAKI AND AMIN ARE IN CONTROL AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND CONTENT THAT THEY SHOULD REMAIN SO. NEITHER ON THIS LEVEL, NOR THROUGH SECONDARY SOURCES IN MOSCOW, LIKELY TO HAVE GOOD ACCESS, HAVE WE RECEIVED INDICATIONS OF PLANS TO REPLACE TARAKI AND AMIN. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT NO SUCH PLANS EXIST. THE MORE WORRIED THE RUSSIANS AND THE MORE THEY MAY BE PLOTTING BEHIND THE SCENES, THE LESS LIKELY THEY ARE TO REVEAL THEIR HAND TO FOREIGN OBSERVERS IN MOSCOW. END TEXT.

SECOND TEXT OF DUTCH PAPER:

KABUL BASED CONTACTS OF OUR EMBASSY IN TEHRAN CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT AN AFGHAN ARMY BRIGADE COMPLETE WITH ITS EQUIPMENT HAD DEFECTED TO THE REBELS. THE SITUATION IN KABUL IS REPORTED TO REMAIN VERY TENSE AND IT SEEMS THAT THE REGIME EVEN PERIODICALLY WITH A REGULAR ATTACK ON THE CAPITAL. CURFEW REMAINS WHILE TANKS ARE POSITIONED ON ALL CROSS-ROADS IN TOWN. THE TEHRAN TIMES REPORTED THAT AGAIN 12 SOVIET CITIZENS HAD BEEN KILLED (11 IN KADAMER, SOUTH AFGHANISTAN). THE TEHRAN TIMES ISSUED THE NEWS THAT FOUR OUT OF SIX REBEL GROUPINGS (NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, JAMIAE ISLAMI, MOVEMENT FOR THE REVOLUTION, AND A FACTION OF THE MEZHEB ISLAMI) HAD DECIDED TO UNITE UNDER THE NAME "FIGHTERS OF ISLAM".

THE GENERAL SITUATION SEEMS AGAIN TO DETERIORATE FURTHER FOR THE TARAKI/AMIN REGIME, AND LITTLE MORE THAN KABUL AND PROVINCIAL CAPITALS ARE UNDER EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND THE INSURRECTION STILL LACKS LEADERSHIP, COORDINATION AND A CLEAR POLICY AS WELL AS EXTERNAL HELP ON ANY LARGER SCALE. THIS MEANS AMONGST OTHER THINGS THAT THE REBELS PRESUMABLY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RAISE A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON THE URBAN CENTERS NOW UNDER CONTROL OF THE REGIME. WHICH AGAIN MEANS THAT THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE DANGER FOR THE REGIME OF LOSING ITS PRESENT - BE IT VERY UNCOMFORTABLE - POSITION. MAYBE THE BIGGEST IMMEDIATE THREAT IS THAT OF THE ARMY, OR A LARGE PART OF IT (SEE ABOVE), TURNING AGAINST IT.

WITH THE REGIME ITS SOVIET ALLY FOR UNION IS MUCH AT STAKE (IN THE WORDS OF GERMAN SPEAKING NOTES: "BY WINNING AFGHANISTAN THE DISTANCE SEPARATING THEM FROM THEIR GEO-STRATEGIC AIM THE INDIAN OCEAN HAS SHRUNK TO 521 KM"). THEY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE, ATTEMPTING UP ITS MILITARY INTERESTS BUT CONFIDENTLY, HOWEVER, HAS SERIOUS AND DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THEM.

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INFO RUFMKK/ALL NATO CAPITALS

RUSLY/APEX/CLASSY KAEUL 0026

RUENZO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 6442

RUENBAC/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 8117

RUOMHR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 0919

RUSBO/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0879

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 83 USNATO 25063

- EVEN WITH A MUCH BIGGER SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE IT IS UNLIKELY TO BE EASY TO PACIFY AFGHANISTAN
- FULL SCALE MILITARY INTERVENTION IS LIKELY TO HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR MOSCOW'S RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN AND, MAYBE MORE IMPORTANT, WITH PAKISTAN
- INTERVENTION MIGHT HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN ASIA
- INTERVENTION WOULD HARM MOSCOW'S POSITION IN THE ARAB WORLD
- INTERVENTION WOULD INFLUENCE CHINA'S POSITION ON THE CONTINENT
- INTERVENTION WILL HAVE CERTAIN REPERCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, WHICH, WITH SAIT II STILL UNRATIFIED, MAY BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

AS VIRTUALLY ALL CIRCULATED DOCUMENTS POINT OUT THE BEST SOLUTION FOR MOSCOW MIGHT BE A POLITICAL ONE: A CHANGE OF REGIME TOWARDS ONE WITH A BROADER BASIS, BUT STILL "REVOLUTIONARY" AND LOYAL TO MOSCOW. THE PROBLEM HERE SEEMS TO BE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ANY GOVERNMENT WHICH IS COMMUNIST, ANTI ISLAM AND, ABOVE ALL, PRO USSR, WOULD HAVE BROADLY BASED POPULAR BACKING.

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OUR EMBASSY IN MOSCOW REPORTED ON CERTAIN INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WAS ALREADY PREPARING PUBLIC OPINION FOR POSSIBLE POLITICAL MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MIGHT LESSEN SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN: IN A PRAVDA ARTICLE OF JULY 29, UNLIKE PREVIOUSLY, NO MENTION WAS BEEN MADE OF THE FACT THAT AFGHANISTAN AND THE USSR ARE NEIGHBOURING STATES, WHILE PRAVDA OF AUGUST 7 REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON THE CLASHES IN KABUL. OUR EMBASSY'S CONCLUSION IS THAT MOSCOW, FACED WITH DIFFICULT OPTIONS, MIGHT WATCH THE TRAMVAXIN REGIME BEING TOPPLED WITHOUT INTERVENING."

WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, MOSCOW SEEMS TO HAVE REACHED CROSS-ROADS AND WILL HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE: EITHER LIMIT ITS INTERFERENCE AND RUN CERTAIN RISKS AS FAR AS SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN IS CONCERNED, OR GO THE "VIETNAM WAY". THE IMPORTANCE OF AFGHANISTAN FOR MOSCOW NEEDS NO FURTHER EXPLANATIONS.

THE FACT THAT AFGHANISTAN IS A BORDER STATE OF THE USSR CAN HARDLY BE OVEREMPHASIZED. REPORTS FROM OUR EMBASSY IN ISLAMABAD CONTINUE TO HANDED ON THE FACT THAT PAKISTANI OFFICIALS WITHOUT EXCEPTION BRAND AS WISHFUL THINKING ALL WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES WHICH RECKON WITH THE POSSIBILITY THAT MOSCOW MIGHT CONSIDER LOOSENING ITS HOLD ON AFGHANISTAN.

AS TO THE POPULAR COMPARISON WITH US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM: MANY DIFFERENCES ARE OBVIOUS, AMONGST WHICH:

- THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE IMPLICATIONS THIS HAS FOR EASY LOGISTICS
- THE FACT THAT THE REBELLION SO FAR LACKS LEADERSHIP, COHESION AND POLICY
- THE FACT THAT THE REBELLION SO FAR HAS NO IMPORTANT EXTERNAL SUPPORT, AND THAT, GLITTER

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